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STATE FOR NEA/PI, NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, IIP/G/NEA
ABU DHABI FOR MEPI (HWECHSEL, MHOPKINS, AALKHATIB)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMPI](#) [KU](#) [MEPI](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEPIC 3: Harvesting the Fruits of Small Grants

Ref: A) Kuwait 540

B) Kuwait 436

C) 05 Kuwait 4144

D) 05 Kuwait 2732

11. Summary: The Ambassador chaired Kuwait's MEPI team meeting held January 31, 2006, to review the progress of MEPI in Kuwait during the first quarter (Q1) of FY06 and to make plans for the next quarter. The key development during FY06Q1 was the completion of several MEPI Small Grant projects in Kuwait, including the brochure on women's legal rights and a survey of Kuwaiti attitudes toward the role of women in the political process (see reftel A). NDI's regional campaign school held late in September, 2005, was an unqualified success. Kuwait's MEPI team also facilitated, in December, 2005, visits to Kuwait by Erin Walsh, NEA Senior Advisor, and Arwa Al-Khatib, Information and Small Grants Specialist from MEPI's Abu Dhabi regional office, who met with a number of GOK officials and MEPI current and potential grant recipients to discuss MEPI objectives, ongoing projects and their results. In addition to MEPI activities in support of the Freedom Agenda, Post continued its sustained efforts to promote key elements of political reform. A complete set of "Freedom Agenda" reporting cables can be found on the Embassy Kuwait SIPRNet website. End summary.

MEPI Visitors Review Progress

12. The Embassy hosted two visits during FY06Q1 that promoted MEPI and sought to gauge the progress and utility of MEPI projects in Kuwait. From November 29 to December 2, 2005, Erin Walsh, NEA Senior Advisor, visited with officials at Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, several small grant recipient organizations, and women's political participation program trainees. In addition to these meetings, Ms. Walsh attended several traditional diwanis and a women's diwaniya breakfast, where she exchanged ideas about political reform as well as MEPI goals with Kuwaiti participants. Arwa Al-Khatib, Information and Small Grants Specialist based in the MEPI regional office in Abu Dhabi evaluated the progress of Kuwait's MEPI Small Grant recipients and promoted MEPI during her visits with possible future applicants from December 4 to 6, 2005.

Status of Small Grants Projects

13. During the first quarter of FY06, five small grants projects were in progress in Kuwait. Members of the Embassy's MEPI team worked closely with grantees to encourage forward movement on each project:

a) The Gender Budgeting Study, conducted by the Kuwait Economic Society, begun in FY04 reached completion, with the final report scheduled for an early 2006 printing.

b) The Women Network completed its survey on "The Role of Women in the Political Process and Deepening Democracy in Kuwait." The

organization has distributed approximately 500 copies of the booklet containing its findings (reftel A).

c) A female Kuwaiti academic and women's rights activist developed a brochure to educate Kuwaiti women about their legal rights. Ten thousand copies of the brochure have been printed and are being distributed nationwide. The brochure was created in coordination with a Kuwaiti law firm that analyzed the text based on existing Kuwaiti legislation and suggested improvements (reftel A).

d) CineMagic's civic-minded film project began its activities during this quarter. Six of the expected ten students completed the film school's coursework. Three of the six students are near completion of their films. The films focus on anti-smoking and anti-speeding. The ultimate goal of this project was not only a high-quality final film product, but also screening of the films as public service announcements at Kuwait's cinemas and on television. The production process that highlighted teamwork, men and women working together, and democratic dialogue, has had a positive impact on the project participants. The remaining CineMagic projects are due to be completed in Q2 and Q3 of FY06. (Note: Post has requested ESF funds for an anti-trafficking in persons project that would expand on MEPI objectives by using CineMagic graduates to produce a series of public service announcements on labor exploitation. See Kuwait 436. End note.)

e) The Lothan Youth Achievement Center (LoYAC) project on summer entrepreneurship training for youth is scheduled to be implemented in June and July, 2006. The Public Affairs Section has put LoYAC's leadership in contact with international institutions that will aid the development of their summer internship projects.

Women, Education and Youth

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14. Three larger scale MEPI-funded programs also are progressing.

a) At the end of September, the NDI Partners in Participation Conference took place in Kuwait. Under the coordination of the Embassy's Political Section, the conference brought together more than 78 women from 16 countries in the Middle East to attend a regional training program that aimed to prepare political candidates to campaign for elected office in their respective countries.

b) The MEPI-funded ACCESS microscholarship English-language program began in November 2005. AMIDEAST is implementing the program in Kuwait with 200 non-elite Kuwaiti ninth- and tenth-graders participating in the 6-month long English-language program which is tied in to other Embassy Public Diplomacy programs.

c) During this quarter, the Injaz/Junior Achievement implementer in Kuwait continued to lay the groundwork for significant program implementation during Q2 and Q3 of FY06. We expect the Injaz project to begin implementation and actual work with students from Kuwaiti public and private schools early in 2006.

Call for FY06 Small Grant Program Applications

15. During Q1, Embassy actively recruited applicants for MEPI Small Grants, meeting with prospective grantees, promoting MEPI at diwanis and through contacts, and faxing MEPI information to grassroots organizations. By the beginning of CY2006, one completed application was submitted to the MEPI team. To further promote the Small Grants Program, Embassy Public Affairs issued a press release soliciting grant applications on November 20, 2005 that was published in major Kuwaiti newspapers and posted on the Embassy web site (<http://kuwait.usembassy.gov>). Post established a deadline of March 9, 2006 for the receipt of all applications.

Conferences & Training

16. The Embassy's MEPI team has continued to offer support to MEPI

regional activities by recruiting, selecting, and arranging for the inclusion of appropriate Kuwaiti participants. In Q1, two MEPI-related programs had recruitment cycles. The MEPI U.S. Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women had four qualifying applicants. The selection committee chose two Kuwaiti candidates to take part in the program: Alia Al-Mutawa, Assistant in Administration Marketing at the Petrochemical Industries Company, and Reem Al-Hajri, Senior Investment Officer at KIPCO Asset Management Company, who departed for the United States in November 2005.

17. The MEPI Team EconOff, in coordination with AMIDEAST, participated in the selection of Kuwait's participants in the Middle East Entrepreneur Training in the United States (MEET U.S.) program. Of 13 qualified candidates, three young women were chosen to represent Kuwait in the program: Hissah Al-Sabah, Managing Director, Dar Al-Funoon Art Gallery; Manal Al-Husaini, General Manager and owner of Comtec Trading Corporation; and Wafa Al-Rasheed, Technical Director at the Kuwait Stock Exchange. The three participants are slated to travel to the U.S. at the end of March 2006.

18. In addition to the abovementioned programs, the MEPI team nominated two prominent Kuwaiti human rights activists and attorneys to participate in the Demos Institute Project: Badriya Al-Awadhi and Suad Al-Tararwah.

Coming Up Next Quarter

19. The next quarter for MEPI in Kuwait is expected to be robust. Post will review Small Grant proposals, evaluate proposals for the Standing Program Announcement, and anticipate results from the Junior Achievement project.

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